United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia are admitted to United Nations membership, bringing to 178 total number of Member States; Secretary-General chairs first meeting of Task Force to monitor situation in Yugoslavia and to coordinate the United Nations role in solving crisis.

+ General Assembly appropriates funds for Peace-Keeping Operations in Cambodia and El Salvador; seeks disaster relief for Nicaragua.

+ Secretary-General leaves New York for three-day official visit to Montreal, where he will meet with Canadian Prime Minister, among others.

+ Secretary-General recommends to Security Council that mandate of United Nations Disengagement Observer Force be extended for another six months until end of November.

+ Cuba asks Security Council to seek information from United States on persons involved in downing of Cuban airliner over Venezuela in 1976.

+ Secretary-General to launch appeal for $835 million to assist 10 countries in southern Africa affected by "worst drought in living memory" at meeting at Headquarters on Tuesday, 26 May.

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The General Assembly, resuming its forty-sixth session this morning, admitted Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina -- three former Yugoslav Republics -- to United Nations membership, bringing the total number of Member States to 178. Leading their delegations were the President of Croatia, Franco Tudjman, the President of Slovenia, Milan Kujan, and the Foreign Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haris Silajdzic.

Speaking at the three-part flag-raising ceremony following the admission, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that each new admission brought the Organization closer to its goal of universality. He welcomed the new countries' "extraordinary blend of civilizations, religions, languages, customs and cultures".

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However, he pointed out that "even as their flags are raised, hostilities and human suffering persist in their region". He said that he hoped that their flags would "symbolise ... peace, justice and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities".

"Today represents a new beginning," he went on. "Let us hope that the membership of these three Republics in the United Nations will lead to healing and cooperation and that peace and prosperity may be restored to their region."

In separate news today, a United Nations spokeswoman announced that Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has established a Task Force to monitor the situation in Yugoslavia, on "a continuous basis and to coordinate the United Nations role" in solving the crisis.

Members of the Task Force, which will meet at least three times a week, are Under-Secretaries-General Jan Eliasson, Marrack Goulding and Vladimir Petrovsky, and Senior Political Advisor Alvaro de Soto. The Task Force will be chaired by the Secretary-General.

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Also this morning, the Assembly adopted resolutions appropriating $606 million for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) -- the largest peace-keeping operation in United Nations history -- and $39 million for the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) for their operation through 31 October.

That action, following the recommendations of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), reflected those of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on the financing of both peace-keeping operations. The Secretary-General had requested $764,058,800 for the operation of UNTAC and $48,784,000 for ONUSAL.

In other action this morning, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to support Nicaragua's rehabilitation efforts in the areas affected by the eruption of the Cerro Negro volcano. In a resolution introduced by the representative of Nicaragua and adopted without a vote, the Assembly invited Member States, international organizations and United Nations agencies to respond generously during the emergency and rehabilitation process in Nicaragua.

The Assembly will meet again at a date to be announced.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali left New York this afternoon for a three-day official visit to Montréal, during which he will meet with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada, and address the opening session of the First International Conference of Young Leaders.

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On Saturday, 23 May, the Secretary-General will meet with Jean Doré, Mayor of Montréal, at Old City Hall. He will then visit the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), where he will hold a meeting with Assad Kotaite, President of the Council of ICAO, and attend a luncheon in his honour with ICAO Council members. Later in the afternoon, the Secretary-General will meet with Robert Bourassa, Premier of Québec.

On Sunday, 24 May, the Secretary-General will have a working luncheon with Prime Minister Mulroney. In the afternoon, he will deliver the inaugural address at the opening session of the First International Conference of Young Leaders, and in the evening, the Secretary-General will attend a dinner hosted by Jeanne Sauvé, Honorary President of the Jeanne Sauvé Youth Foundation.

The Secretary-General will return to New York on Monday morning.

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The Secretary-General has recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which has overseen the disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces since 1974, be extended for a further period of six months, until 30 November 1992.

In his report to the Security Council on UNDOF, dated 19 May, in which he reviews the past six months, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said that while the Israel-Syria sector had remained generally quiet, the situation in the Middle East as a whole continued to be potentially dangerous. He said it was likely to remain so "unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached". He said he considered UNDOF's continued presence in the area to be essential, and the Governments of both Syria and Israel had agreed to the proposed extension.

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Cuba has called on the Security Council to condemn an act of sabotage carried out against a Cubana Airlines aircraft in October 1976 and to urge the United States to provide information and evidence in its possession regarding the sabotage and the persons who planned, directed and carried it out.

Under a draft resolution introduced by Cuba last night at a formal meeting of the Council, the Council would ask the Secretary-General to seek United States cooperation in providing that information and in facilitating the investigation and punishment of the guilty parties so as to help eradicate international terrorism.

In his statement to the Council, the representative of Cuba, Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, asked if the United States was reluctant to discuss the terrorist destruction of the Cuban airliner because the passengers who died "were dark-skinned" or because the plane destroyed was owned by a third world country. He said the United States, despite its international legal

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obligations, had not provided information that would have assisted in the prosecution of Orlando Bosch, the terrorist responsible for directing the sabotage of the Cubana Airliner.

Edward J. Perkins, in his first speech to the Security Council as the Permanent Representative of the United States, said that, by meeting to consider events that had occurred 15 years before, the Council was wasting valuable time. Cuba's attempt to portray his country as a harbourer of terrorists was absurd. He denied what he described as "fatuous allegations" that his Government was hiding Luis Posada Carriles, thought to be involved in the incident, and that it had supported the terrorist activity of Orlando Bosch.

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A United Nations spokeswoman announced today that the Secretary-General will launch an appeal for $835 million "to assist 10 countries in Southern Africa affected by the worst drought in living memory" threatening 18 million people in the region with starvation.

The appeal will be announced at a meeting in the Trusteeship Council Chamber on Tuesday, 26 may, where the Secretary-General will address the drought crisis in southern Africa affecting, by some estimates, as many as 130 million people. On the same day, in Harare, Zimbabwe, countries of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) will launch the Consolidated United Nations/SADCC Appeal to mobilize the support which is desperately needed to respond to southern Africa's crisis. The scale of the drought emergency is described as "unprecedented" in its scale.

A Donors' Conference will be held in Geneva on 1 and 2 June to mobilize resources in response to the emergency Appeal, and non-governmental organizations involved in the relief effort will participate in a forum there on 2 June. The Appeal has also involved representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The Consolidated United Nations/SADCC Appeal seeks $685 million for food aid and $150 million for non-food related activities to benefit Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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